

Musharraf opts for carrot and stick policy to India

Vajpayee seeks an end to infiltration

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf on Saturday said his country was ready to resolve all outstanding differences with India, including Kashmir, through dialogue but warned New Delhi of an "unforgettable lesson" if it attempted to settle the issues by use of force.

"All issues, including the Kashmir dispute, should be settled through negotiations. But if India wants to use force, it should not harbour any doubts," he said in a brief address to the nation over the State Television and Radio on the occasion of 'Pakistan Day'.

"Pakistan is capable of defending itself and can thwart any aggression with a powerful and befitting response. If anyone dared... it would be taught an unforgettable lesson," he said adding Pakistan would not compromise its dignity and honour.

March 23 is observed as 'Pakistan day' as it was on this day in 1940 that the Muslim League passed a resolution to form a separate nation for Muslims of undivided India.

Meanwhile, voicing concern over continuing militant strikes in the Jammu sector, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Saturday asked



PHOTO: AFP
Janjira Janchom, 19, waves for photo after being crowned Miss Thailand 2002 in Bangkok on late Saturday. Janjira will represent Thailand in the next Miss Universe Pageant in Puerto Rico.

No breakthrough in Pak church attack probe

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani investigators remained in the dark Sunday over who was behind a deadly church attack in the capital's diplomatic enclave one week ago, failing to make any arrests or identify suspects.

"We've had no breakthrough," Islamabad police chief Rao Iqbal told AFP. "So far we haven't made any arrests. But we have questioned many people."

Five people were killed on March 17 when a man lobbed several grenades into the Protestant International Church in Islamabad's diplomatic enclave, as a congregation of mainly expatriate worshippers held Sunday morning prayers.

US diplomat Milton Green's wife and teenage step-daughter died, along with a Pakistani woman, an Afghan man, and a still-unidentified man who is believed to have been the attacker.

Israel, Palestinians gear up for make-or-break talks

AFP, Jerusalem

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Senior Israeli and Palestinian negotiators geared Sunday for new security talks that could make or break a US envoy's hopes for a ceasefire as well as broader moves toward a Middle East peace.

The negotiations chaired by Anthony Zinni are aimed at halting 18 months of violence that has claimed more than 1,570 lives and setting in motion a chain of events that could lead to a new, bold Arab peace initiative.

With a truce in place, Israel has said it would lift travel restrictions on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat so he could hold talks with US Vice President Dick Cheney and attend a crucial Arab summit opening Wednesday in Beirut.

Zinni was to chair Sunday a new meeting of the Israeli-Palestinian security high committee. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was also to meet with his full cabinet and separately with top security aides.

The Israelis have said they expected to take a decision Sunday on whether they would allow Arafat to travel after keeping him penned up in the West Bank city of Ramallah for nearly four months.

Zinni, who arrived here 10 days ago, has already chaired three sessions of the security committee, the last on Friday, without a

ceasefire accord. At the same time, a spate of suicide bombings and clashes has fueled tensions.

"Zinni is frustrated and disappointed," the mass-circulation Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot blared in a front-page headline Sunday. It quoted him as saying "chances for a ceasefire are growing slimmer."

In the latest fatal incident, an Israeli settler woman was shot and killed by Palestinian gunmen north of the West Bank town of Ramallah early Sunday, Israeli public radio reported.

It said the 23-year-old victim was hit by a bullet which passed through the windshield of an armored public bus carrying her near a Jewish settlement. She died before she could be treated.

South Asia vows to quash TB

AFP, New Delhi

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South Asian governments pledged Sunday to step up efforts against tuberculosis, which kills hundreds of thousands of people each year in the impoverished region even though the disease is treatable.

Some 45 percent of the world's tuberculosis cases are recorded in South Asia alone, where many of the rural poor lack access to basic medical care, according to the World Health Organization.

In India, more than 1,000 people die every day from tuberculosis, which infects four more people every minute, said statistics released to observe World Tuberculosis Day.

In a message published in newspapers, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee appealed to health officials both inside and outside government to ensure that everyone with tuberculosis receives proper

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said poverty alleviation and improvement of Bangladesh's living standards must be linked to a national campaign against tuberculosis.

She said government hospitals nationwide were providing free treatment and medicine to TB patients.

But the disease often turns fatal in the impoverished country when patients fail to receive prescribed medication or close health supervision, said Maswoodur Rahman Prince, a Bangladeshi doctor.

He said TB not only kills and cripples its victims, but also forces hundreds of Bangladeshis to lose their jobs.

In Nepal, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba called, in a message, for health workers and members of civil society to join ranks with the government to combat the disease.



PHOTO: AFP
Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (2nd L) poses with other awardees of the "Padma Award" at the presidential palace in New Delhi on Saturday. Indian President KR Narayanan gave away 48 "Padma Awards" to economists, actors, journalists and doctors.

A list of Padma awardees

PTI, New Delhi

Eminent economist C Rangarajan, leading Hindustani classical vocalist Kishori Amonkar and Attorney General Soli Sorabjee were on Saturday honoured with Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award, while noted playback singer KJ Yesudas and former diplomat Jagat Singh Mehta received Padma Bhushan.

At a glittering ceremony at the Ashoka Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan (President House), President KR Narayanan gave away Padma Awards for 2000 to 45 eminent personalities for excellence in various fields.

Classical singers Prabha Atre and Shoba Guruk, pioneer of India's IT revolution Faquir Chand Kohli, mountaineer Major HPS Ahluwalia, cartoon journalist Mario De Miranda, Writer Nirmal Verma, eminent surgeon Natesan Rangabashyam, space scientist RV Perumal, foreign industrialist Henning Holck-Larsen, yoga exponent BKS Raja Iyengar and Russian literature YP Chelyshev were the other Padma Bhushan awardees.

Besides the presentation of three Padma Vibhushan and 13 Padma Bhushan awards, 29 people were honoured with Padma Shri. Three Padma Shri awardees

ULFA calls for talks with Delhi

AFP, Guwahati

A powerful separatist movement in India's northeastern state of Assam Sunday gave its strongest signal yet that it is willing to hold talks with the federal government to end two decades of insurgency.

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which has some 3,000 militants fighting for an independent state, called for a negotiated settlement with New Delhi.

"We desperately want a peaceful solution of the ongoing Indo-Assam conflict and so the conditions have been set already to hammer out a peaceful solution through meaningful and scientific dialogue," the ULFA said in its monthly mouthpiece, Freedom.

The ULFA statement, however, warned the federal government to be sincere and not try to "divert people in the name of a bogus offer."



PHOTO: AFP
US President George W. Bush (C) presents US Secretary of State Colin Powell (L) to Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo (2nd R) and Peruvian First Lady Eliane Karp (R) after Bush's arrival in Lima on Saturday. At fourth right is US First Lady Laura Bush.

Bush talks tough against terrorism in Peru

AFP, Lima

US President George W. Bush was to depart Lima for El Salvador early Sunday, after vowing to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Peru's Alejandro Toledo in the battle against terrorism and poverty.

Three days after a bombing killed nine people and injured 30 more near the US embassy here, Bush, on a day-long visit here, expressed "deep sympathy" for the loss of life and said he and his host "share a common perspective on terrorism: We must stop it."

Toledo said Peru and the United States were allies in "a war without quarter against terrorism and drug trafficking" and said he and Bush shared "the energy and the stubbornness" required to achieve victory.

Bush stops in San Salvador Sunday to talk trade with Central American leaders before heading back to Washington.

Peruvian authorities deployed an unprecedented security arsenal during the visit, placing its MIG-29 fighters on highest alert to intercept any wayward planes, while snipers patrolled the rooftops along the route and near Bush's hotel.

Helicopters tracked Bush's motorcade from the moment it left the military airport of Callao and also patrolled the skies above Lima, while 22,000 policy deployed to the city's streets -- including 2,000 special operations forces, 70 members trained for rapid intervention force.

"We have experienced the effects of terrorism here for 20 years. The United States, on September 11th," said Toledo, who noted he learned of the attack on the United States over breakfast here with US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Bush and Toledo put their back-slapping friendship on display during the first visit here by a US head of state. The smiling leaders bantered easily about more trivial qualities they shared -- like their almost identical blue ties, or their age -- as they announced a series of agreements in the cavernous hall of the Presidential Palace.

"President Bush has very good taste with regard to color in ties... he's also taller than I am," rejoined Toledo.

Marshalling his visit's symbolic power to help the politically struggling Toledo, Bush praised him as a "leader who symbolizes Peru's revitalization" and touted Peru's institutions as "a beacon for democracy."



Nail king

PHOTO: AFP
Murari Aditya, a 59-year-old unemployed Kolkatian, displays his polished nails, which he has not cut since 1962, at his residence on Sunday. The total length of Aditya's five nails is approximately 317 cm (approx. 10 feet, 5 inches).

Nepal bans under-16s from climbing Mt Everest

AFP, Kathmandu

Climbers under the age of 16 are to be banned by Nepal from scaling Mount Everest, the world's tallest peak, in a move aimed at preventing over-keen adolescent alpinists from pushing themselves beyond their limits.

"This restriction of age is being introduced by the ministry of tourism on humanitarian grounds," head of the mountaineering division in the ministry of tourism and culture, Ganesh Rai Karki, told AFP.

The ban, which also applies to other mountains in Nepal, will come into effect immediately.

Last May a 15-year-old Nepalese schoolboy Temba Tsheri became the youngest person ever to climb the 8,848 metre (29,029 foot) mountain, an achievement now likely to remain unchallenged.

talks with Washington and London "to work out an arrangement for tackling the problem" of the Maoists.

"They have yet to respond, but we hope to win support of the US and UK as they have vowed to eliminate terrorism from the world," he said.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell made a rare visit to Nepal earlier this year, where he pledged support for the government's crackdown on the Maoists but was miffed on whether Washington would provide material help to the government.

The Maoists in November relaunched their campaign to topple the constitutional monarchy, breaking a four-month truce. More than 2,700 people have died since the rebels launched their "people's war" in 1996.

Troops patrol Gujarat

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

Troops patrolled deserted streets in riot-hit areas as authorities stepped up security on the eve of the Muslim festival of Muharram in the Gujarat state where hundreds have died in religious clashes.

More than 700 people, mostly Muslims, have been killed in Gujarat in reprisals for an attack by a Muslim mob on a train last month in which 58 Hindus died.

Tensions between Hindus and Muslims, who form 10 per cent of Gujarat's 50 million population, have risen sharply in the western state after the worst bloodshed in almost a decade.

Rampaging mobs have regularly burnt houses or attacked places of worship in Gujarat and while there had been no mass killings for two weeks, isolated ones were still reported.